



The effects of participation in multicultural service learning with refugee and immigrant populations in undergraduate students' self-perceptions of multicultural competence

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Keywords: Multicultural competence, self-assessment, cultural diversity, global responsibility, quasi-experimental

Conference track: Higher education student outcomes

Format: Research/Scholarly paper

Summary

This study evaluates the effects of a multicultural service-learning program on the multicultural competence of undergraduate students enrolled in Cultural Diversity in the U.S., a general education course at Western Kentucky University.

Higher education in the 21st century has acknowledged the need to prepare global and socially responsible citizens. Service-learning experiences are one of the many pedagogical tools faculty utilize in order to ensure students meet such learning goals, particularly service-learning programs with minority and/or foreign populations. For this course I utilize *The \$100 Solution*TM program in which groups of students partner with local immigrant and refugee families.

This quasi-experimental study uses pre- and post-course self-assessment results that have been collected across three semesters with 230 student participants. By comparing information from students in one such course who complete a service-learning component versus those who do not, this study seeks to

answer the following central question: Is participation in multicultural service-learning experiences positively related to an increase in students' self-assessment of multicultural competence?

In the three-semester pilot stages, the researcher has been utilizing a modified version of the Self-Assessment of Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills as the measuring instrument. The data analysis to date suggests that the course has a positive impact on the students' perception of their multicultural competence. More specifically, the Cultural Diversity course's largest impact is that all students perceive a greater increase in their multicultural knowledge competence (12.48% average increase as compared to 4.51% average increase in their multicultural awareness). On the other hand, the most significant impact that participating in the service-learning project has on students is on their perception of their own multicultural skills (5.85% larger increase for service-learning students than for non-service-learning students). Service-learning students had an average increase of 6.48% in their multicultural skills self-assessment scores, whereas non-service-learning students reported no significant change in their perception of their multicultural skills (scoring themselves only 0.63% higher in the post-course self-assessment than in the pre-course self-assessment).

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